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ABSTRACT

This guide provides information for those interested in starting a family day care association, which is defined as "an independent organization whose membership is comprised of home-based caregivers." The most important function of these associations is to empower individual providers by offering support, sponsoring workshops, and building leadership skills. Included are guidelines for getting started, setting goals and objectives, becoming incorporated, structuring bylaws and dues, electing officers, establishing committees, and recruiting and retaining employees. A series of short guidelines on miscellaneous topics is also included. The importance of organizing a unified voice that will enable providers to confront important issues and make positive changes is emphasized. Sample bylaws and articles of incorporation are appended. (GLR)

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Beginning a Family Day Care Association

Introduction

A family day care association is an independent organization whose membership is comprised of home-based caregivers. At the discretion of the group's members, the organization can include parents and others who are interested in child care issues.

Associations are formed to create a mechanism for empowering the home-based caregiver. Through an association, a provider has the opportunity to share her work experiences with peers as well as receive support, training and information.

Some associations are informal groups that function as social organizations. Often these groups do not elect officers or set organizational goals. Meetings occur in a provider's home, community center or church. These support groups help the caregiver combat the feeling of isolation, a common problem among home-based professionals.

Other groups are more formally organized. Officers are elected, goals are established, and by-laws that determine the rules, privileges and function of the association are adopted. Many associations incorporate and are tax exempt.

While forming a formal association may require more work, the rewards are worth the effort. Active associations are the most effective mechanism for promoting the family day care profession. Strong organizations can be a powerful political force.

Many developed associations offer membership services like liability insurance and health care coverage. Some groups sponsor toy lending libraries or operate information and referral agencies. Most importantly, however, associations serve to empower individual providers by offering support, sponsoring workshops and building leadership skills.

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Getting Started

Getting providers involved in starting an association requires a lot of time and effort. If necessary, enlist the support of local licensing, social service or information and referral agencies; they can supply a list of licensed providers.

Invite providers to a planning meeting. Don't be disappointed if just a few caregivers turn out for the initial meeting. Often a small group of committed individuals is an excellent way to begin your work. If you do start small, always work on recruiting new members, which can best be accomplished through a membership committee.

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Setting Goals and Objectives

Determine the group's needs and goals, but be sure that the concerns of the providers are met. Narrow your objectives, try to state the association's purpose in several sentences. A sharp focus will help when you conduct media and outreach campaigns.

The objectives of a particular group will vary according to the member's needs. For example, one association's goal may be to promote the provider's professional growth. Therefore, that group will sponsor training seminars, education workshops and conferences. Another group may want to improve the community's image of family day care. Consequently, these providers will be an active voice for the profession, performing an advocacy role.

Some associations offer membership services, such as information and referral services or toy lending libraries. Another objective might include sponsoring social activities for children and their families.

Becoming Incorporated

If you plan to incorporate and/or file for tax exempt status, consult an attorney or contact your local Internal Revenue Service (IRS) office. The IRS has specific rules that govern the type of activity your organization can conduct. The association's tax status will determine the extent of your member's advocacy work and fundraising activities.

By-Laws and Dues Structure

By-laws outline the organization's constituency, the officers' roles, term of office, election requirements and voting procedures, dues structure, membership requirements, rules of operation and other relevant information (see attached sample).

Membership fees and dues are an important source of revenue for an association, consequently the fee structure should be determined during the early stages of the association's development.

Electing Officers

A new association will need to elect officers. The role and duties of each officer should be clearly defined. The length of term each officer will hold should be specified also.

For most associations, the office of President, Vice-President, Recorder, and Treasurer works well. These officers, along with the Committee Chairpersons, make up the association's Executive Board. Other associations have an Executive Director, a Recorder and several Vice-Presidents who serve as governors of the association's committees.

Elections should be scheduled at regular intervals. When determining the schedule, the length of each officer's term should be carefully considered. Serving as an association officer requires time and effort. If the terms are too long, provider "burn-out" can become a problem.

Some associations hold staggered elections. In short, a staggered election means that one-half of the officers are elected one year, while the second-half are elected the following year. One advantage to this system is that the association can retain experienced members on the board, allowing for continuity in the organization. The disadvantage is that providers may be unable to make a two year commitment.

Establishing Committees

Committees are an integral part of any association. Decide how many committees are needed. The number of committees can be changed as the organization changes. Elect a coordinator for each committee and determine their role and responsibility. All committee chairpersons should report to the association president on a regular basis.

There are two types of committees: standing committees and special committees. Standing committees serve a long-term function; these include finance, membership, fundraising, outreach, recruitment and any other committees whose activities are permanent within the association. A special committee, on the other hand, is organized on a short-term basis. These committees may involve research on an issue, social events, conferences, or legislation. Special committees usually focus on a single activity and disband once the event has concluded.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment of new members and the retention of old members should be a priority of any grassroots organization. A serious problem confronting many family day care associations is the lack of continuity resulting from a high turnover rate, of both members and leaders. Family day care associations should develop sound recruitment and retention plans.

Many associations sponsor events, such as a one day conference. This type of event can serve two purposes: bring in new members and create a greater public awareness of the family day care profession.

Get people involved around a particular project or issue. Give them specific tasks and get them involved. Extend to each new member a sense of ownership in the organization.

On-going outreach can include posting flyers in stores, churches and laundromats. Staff a table during a local event and have fact sheets available that promote your group and the family day care profession. Contact other associations and affiliates to acquire new information and gain new insights. Encourage the participation of unregulated providers, discuss the incentives for becoming regulated.

Miscellaneous

o Hold meetings on a regular basis. Be specific about the time, date and place of the meeting.

o Arrange for guest speakers. Invite local experts to address your group (i.e., a doctor to speak on health care or an accountant to talk about taxes).

o Offer benefits. Look into the possibility of offering group liability, health coverage and life insurance to members.

o Offer services. Sponsor toy lending libraries or conduct information and referral services.

o Sponsor conferences. Get a school or church to donate the space, pick a theme and organize a one or two day conference.

o Solicit media attention. Let the print and electronic press know what events your planning. Also, free media includes letters to the editors and Public Service Announcements (PSAs).

o Advocate for child care issues. Providers are the experts in the home-based caregiving field. Voice your opinions.

o Include new members in projects. Make sure all members feel a part of the association, get them involved in an activity.

o Hold fundraisers. Toy sales, raffles, banquets or receptions can be used to supplement the association's budget.

Conclusion

Family day care is a profession that is gaining the recognition of the media, policy makers and early childhood education specialists. Parental preference for family day care is obvious. Today, home-based child care accounts for an estimated 70 percent of all out-of-home child care. And approximately 90 percent of all infant caregiving occurs in the family day care home.

Home-based providers, however, confront many obstacles. Isolation, low wages, few or no benefits are just a few of the problems. Nearly 80 percent of all home-based providers are unregulated; consequently they don't have access to the few support services that are available.

Joining in the development of family day care associations is a first step in forging a unified voice. Associations give providers a forum for organizing. Through organizing providers can build their ranks and solidify their concerns. Creating a united effort will enable providers to confront the issues and make positive changes that not only benefit them, but their community as well.

SAMPLE BYLAWS

Association's Name
(i.e., Bylaws of the _____ Association)

Geographic Location
(i.e., A District of Columbia Nonprofit Corporation)

Article I. Membership

1.1 Categories and Eligibility. Individuals shall be eligible for membership in the _____ Association, if they meet the following criteria:

a. Any person who is a family day care provider.
b. Any provider who is a resident in the state of _____.
c. Parents of children in a family day care home.
d. Family day care trainers.

1.2 Qualifications. Any person eligible for membership may qualify by paying dues for the current year.

1.3 Dues. The _____ Association shall regulate the amount of dues for the organization. Following the establishment of any new dues structure, a majority of the association's members must ratify the decision during a scheduled meeting.

1.4 Rights and Privileges. All members shall be entitled to receive all lists of publications, newsletters and reports issued by the association, including but not limited to the annual budget, minutes and committee reports.

1.5 Meetings.

a. Regularly scheduled meetings. All meetings shall be at such a time and place as given in the notice. Members will be notified of the meeting at least three days before the scheduled meeting.

b. Special Meetings. A special meeting can be convened by the association's President, but at least twelve hours notice must be given to members.

1.6 Voting. The vote of a majority of the total members present at any meeting shall constitute action by the organization. Proxy voting is (is not) allowed, and ballots can (not) be cast by either mail or in person.

Article II. Officers

2.1 Board of Directors. The Board shall consist of no more than _____ members or no less than _____ members. All Directors shall be members of the organization.

2.2 Election and Term of Office. Elections shall occur by mail (or paper) ballot. Officers will serve a ____ year term.

2.3 Resignations. Any officer may resign at any time by notifying the Board in writing of her/his resignation. Such resignation will take effect at the time therein specified.

2.4 Vacancies. Vacancies will be filled by a special election of the general membership, if deemed necessary.

2.5 Removal or Suspension. The Board, by majority vote, may remove any Director, at any time.

2.6 Meetings. The Board shall meet _____ time(s) a year. Special meetings of the Board may be called by the Chair or the written request of any three directors.

2.7 Notice of Meetings. Whenever possible, notice of the time and place of every meeting of the Board shall be in writing and signed by the Chair or the Secretary.

2.8 Action by Majority Vote. The vote of the majority of the total number of Directors at any meeting at which a quorum is present shall constitute action by the Board.

Article III. Other Committees

3.1 How Constituted and Powers. The Board, by resolution adopted by a majority of the Directors, may designate and appoint an Executive Committee, which shall consist of ____ members.

3.2 Other Committees. Other Committees may be designated by a resolution adopted by a majority of the Directors (or members) present at a meeting of the Board (organization) when a quorum is present.

3.3 Organization and Procedure. Each Committee shall choose its own officers.

Article IV. Contracts. The Board may prospectively or retroactively authorize any officer, employee or agent, in the name of the Corporation, to enter into any contract. Such authority will be confined to a specific instance.

Article V. Amendments. These By-laws may be altered, amended or repealed by a majority vote of the membership present at a meeting where there is a quorum.

Sample by The Children's Foundation

SAMPLE
Articles of Incorporation
of
The Family Day Care Association

Article I. Name of the Association. ("Federal," "United States," "Reserve," "Olympic," or "Olympiad" can not be used.)

Article II. The organization is to have a perpetual existence.

Article III. The Association's purpose and goals are:
a. promote the family day care profession;
b. provide training of family day care providers; and
c. serve as an active voice for the profession.

Article IV. Membership will be as stated in the By-laws.

Article V. Board of Directors

a. The affairs of the Corporation shall be managed by the membership and the Board of Directors. The initial Board of Directors for the Corporation consists of _____ members. The number of Board members that occur subsequently shall follow the guidelines set forth in the By-laws.

b. All directors must reside in the state of _____ and be members of the Corporation. Election, approval or dismissal from office will follow terms stated in the By-laws (Detail your By-laws here).

c. The initial Board of Directors shall serve until their successors are elected and qualified in accordance with the By-laws, their names and addresses are as follows (list names).

Article VI. The power to alter, amend or repeal the By-laws and the Articles of Incorporation shall reside with the members.

Article VII. The members, directors, officers and employees of the corporation shall not be liable for debts and obligations of the Corporation. (or: The private property of members, officers or Directors of the corporation shall not be subject to payment of corporation debts to any extent whatever).

Article IX. The address of the corporation's initial registered office is _____, and the name of its original agent at such address is _____, who is a resident of _____.

Article X. The Corporation shall exist as of the date on which the Notary certifies or issues the Certificate of Incorporation for the Corporation.

Article XI. The names and address of the Incorporators are:

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have signed and acknowledged these Articles of Incorporation this ____ day of _____, 19__.

INCORPORATORS

_____

_____

_____

City of _____
State _____

I, _____, a Notary Public, hereby certify that on _____, 19__, personally appeared before me, _____, who being first duly sworn, declared that they severally and individually signed the foregoing document as incorporators, and that the statements contained therein are true.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal the day and year written above.

_____
NOTARY PUBLIC
My Commission Expires

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